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. . . Pizarro

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brothers were currently prisoners not of the Indians, but of Almagro. For two months the battle between the two forces raged. Gonzales escaped, and Hernando was freed, only to turn and lead forces against his former captor. And it was to be Hernando that finally captured Almagro.

Once again a trial was held, and 2,000 pages of charges were read against Almagro. As in all the other show trials, Almagro was found guilty, and executed as a traitor to the king. Francisco Pizarro now controlled the vast expanse of the Incan Empire. But he would not control it for long.

Hernando returned to Spain to a jail cell, for the murder of Almagro. Here he would stay for 20 years, but survive to freedom and his 100th birthday.

Back in Peru, Pizarro slept peacefully, now knowing that his death was on hand. In June, 1541, Almagro's followers battered their way into Pizarro's home in Quito. The 70-year-old conquistador was eating dinner, and although surprised, put up a spectacular fight. He killed two of his enemies and wounded many more before his own life slipped away. The conspirators placed Almagro's son in charge of New Castile.

But the destruction of the Pizarro family was not yet over. Gonzales would wrest for himself the lordship of Peru after Francisco's death. But, as arrogant as his brother, he refused to accept the authority of the new viceroy. After waging a fierce battle, he was defeated, and beheaded for treason. Only then did peace, of a sort, reign in the land.

And so, Pizarro gained the renown which he so desperately desired. But at what a price. Just as Cortez would wipe out the entire Aztec civilization, Pizarro would destroy the Incan Empire, its culture and its people. The damage was permanent and irreversible; nothing can bring back the lost artifacts, the lost arts, the lost ancient ways. And all for gold, that most precious and malevolent of metals.

But high in the Andes, one can see a faint glimmer of hope. During Incan times, agriculture flourished, where today there is only poverty and despair. But even after all these centuries, the ancient man-made irrigation channels, which brought life to these arid heights, remain choked with weeds, broken in places. The Indians had long since forgotten how to maintain them and even how they worked. But today, somewhere in that magnificent range, water flows again to small, desperately needed farms. For modern archaeologists, after long study, are working with the descendents of the Incans to repair those ancient waterways. And each time a channel opens and a bright stream of water rushes by, the glory that was once the Incans lives again.